



GEORGES ROUAULT

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*Miserere et
Guerre*

59 Aquatints

FEBRUARY 14 TO MARCH 5, 1949

Kleemann Galleries

65 EAST 57th STREET, NEW YORK

THE incomparable series of prints by Rouault, entitled MISERERE ET GUERRE, was the result of fifteen years of intermittent labor between 1916 and 1931. This undertaking, originally commissioned by Ambroise Vollard, called forth the total resources of the artist's graphic genius. The basic media are aquatint and etching; but Rouault, perhaps the greatest of all experimenters in black and white, displays a baffling variety of techniques in achieving his characteristic tonal qualities. In the beginning there were to be two separate publications, MISERERE and GUERRE, each containing fifty prints in illustration of texts supplied by Rouault's friend, André Suarès. As the difficulties of so vast a scheme became apparent, the initial plan was modified to combine the two titles into a single work for which Rouault made in all fifty-eight plates, all represented in the present exhibition. Art in the twentieth century offers no parallel to this accomplishment, both for scope of conception and splendor of execution.

Without the artist's notations on the plates it would in most cases be impossible to distinguish between the subjects designed for MISERERE and for GUERRE. This is simply another way of saying that at some point Rouault's imagination fused the two themes into a single anguished commentary on modern civilization. In a world haunted by misery war comes increasingly to seem not so much the cause as the grimmest effect of our spiritual desolation. For Rouault the real tragedy of the human situation is not man's inhumanity to man, but man's inhumanity to himself. Thus, where Goya stopped short with registering the physical atrocities of warfare, Rouault lays bare the crucified Christ within each heart. The drama is an intensely private one. Alone and astray in a twilit realm of shadows, the protagonist undergoes the dark night of the soul with no possibility

of shifting the responsibility for his ultimate choice between damnation and salvation.

As a profoundly Christian moralist, Rouault addresses us through symbols. The opposing forces are the perennial ones: hardness of heart over against humility, cruelty over against compassion, pomp over against poverty. And likewise the actors are the timeless personages of allegory: the king and advocate and man of war; the peasant and mendicant and clown; the highborn dame and prostitute and mother in her meekness. Outward habiliments reflect in inverse ratio the state of interior grace. Finery and the trappings of office are invariably the mark of pride or cynicism or brutality. Nakedness and a sense of the stripped skeletal structure within the flesh betoken the ordeal of true faith, epitomized in the wasted and suffering body of Christ. The closed faces, the arrogantly raised chin-lines of the great of the earth are placed in startling contrast to the sunken heads and inwardly agitated countenances of those who are listening for the whispered Word.

The tragic is also the ironic, in the sense that every situation suggests its ideal counterpart. The particular greatness of *MISERERE ET GUERRE* lies in Rouault's mingling of the things of heaven and earth, whereby we are made to know the everlasting implications of our most mundane commitments. The artist's judgments are inflexibly stern; yet nowhere does righteous indignation obscure the underlying pity and grief born of the wisdom that no man is without guilt, that all share alike in the fate of humanity. *MISERERE ET GUERRE* is at once Divine Comedy and Human Comedy; for Rouault there can be no difference.



CHRIST ON THE CROSS WITH DISCIPLES



TENDER YOUTH



WOMAN WITH HAT



THE BLACK VIRGIN



THE ENTOMBMENT



MAN DESTROYER OF MAN



"OUT OF THE DEPTHS I HAVE CRIED TO THEE O LORD"



HEAD OF CHRIST LEANING TO THE RIGHT



"THIS WILL BE THE LAST, LITTLE FATHER"



THE SOCIAL ONES



"EURYDICE! . . . EURYDICE!"



DEPARTURE FOR THE TROPICS



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Miserere et Guerre

List of Prints as recorded by

Una E. Johnson in "Ambroise Vollard"

JOHNSON
NO.

1921

SIZE IN
MM

1	Voile de Sainte-Véronique	437 x 428
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1922

2	L'avocat	511 x 384
3	Au pressoir le raisin fut foulé	392 x 482
4	(Bord de la mer)	362 x 502
5	Chantez matinés (sic), le jour renaît	510 x 365
6	Le condamné s'en est allé . . . et fatigué	477 x 359
7	Le condamné s'en est allé (variante)	501 x 342
8	Dame du Haut Quartier	570 x 410
9	Demain sera beau disait le naufragé	502 x 354
10	Face à face	573 x 434
11	Faubourg de Longue Peine	362 x 506
12	(La femme nue)	515 x 364
13	Gens de bon ton	505 x 435

14	Jésus toujours flagellé	485 x 361
15	La mort l'a pris	508 x 298
16	Nous sommes fous	570 x 413
17	Qui ne se grime pas	566 x 429
18	Tendre putain	505 x 354
19	Tête du Christ penchée à droite	549 x 401
20	(Triste femme)	534 x 407
21	Triste hier, nous serons tous heureux demain ou aujourd'hui pour ton bien heureux, si tu vis encore en vieille imagere (sic)	483 x 372
22	Triste putain, dans le ruisseau voisin cherche ton pain	503 x 378
23	Vieux Faubourg	561 x 415
24	Voile de Saint-Véronique (variante)	

1923

25	Catacombes	576 x 435
26	Christ en Croix avec disciples	596 x 425
27	Jean Marie Terreneuvus. Jean Marie n'est pas (sic) d'Académie	590 x 424
28	Miserere	567 x 420
29	S'en va aux tropiques	

1926

30	Aimez vous les uns les autres	482 x 418
31	Creuse ta fosse garçon . . . et puis repose	592 x 415
32	Crucifixion	
33	(Le voleur)	593 x 437
34	La Déposition	580 x 420
35	Dura lex sed lex	572 x 438
36	Eurydice! Eurydice!	581 x 416

37	(Femme, les bras croisés)	575 x 444
38	Mais nous nous croyons rois	569 x 435
39	Louis XI. (1926?)	599 x 415
40	(Le mendiant). (1926?)	610 x 463

1927

41	Ce sera la dernière, petit père	588 x 428
42	C'est vous Seigneur. Je vous reconnais	570 x 445
43	De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine	430 x 598
44	Guerre en (sic) horreur aux mères	583 x 441
45	Les morts eux-mêmes se sont levés	584 x 442
46	Ni fraîche-ni joyeuse	534 x 421
47	La Vierge Noire	585 x 423
48	Homo Homini Lupus. circa 1927.	421 x 597

NOT DATED

49	Le baptême de Jésus-Christ	570 x 447
50	(La femme avec un chapeau)	558 x 419
51	Longtemps encore l'aveugle sera guidé par le paralytique	585 x 419
52	Mère et enfant	577 x 413
53	Femme avec un grand collier	580 x 415
54	Tête de Jésus-Christ (In design of a cross)	
55	Vierge Noir	577 x 410
56	Passion. Il epouse nos miseres visibles ou secretes	580 x 410
57	Titre Guerre sans legende	580 x 445
58	Au prochain l'homme de bonne volonté reste souvent etranger chacun muré en soi comme la pierre du tomb care surle trepassé	575 x 415
59	La vieille: en cette bouche que fut fracacee gout de (fiel)	510 x 365



GUERRE



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